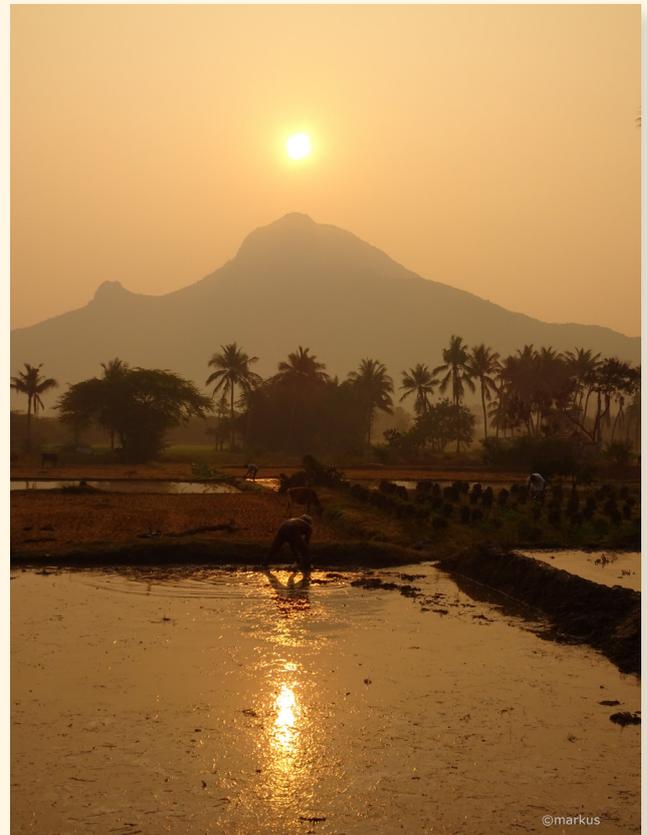
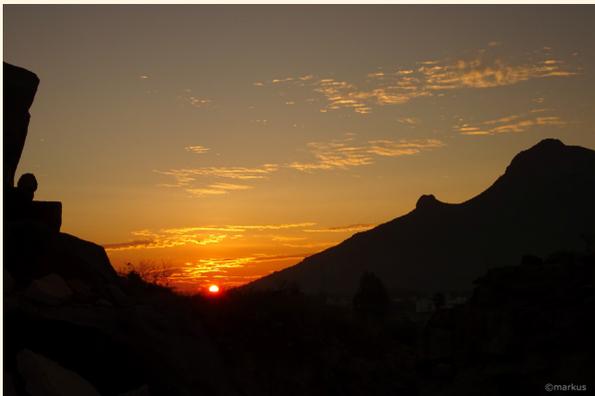


# Saranagati



SARANAGATI  
SRI RAMANASRAMAM

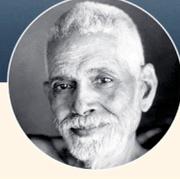
MARCH 2019  
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Markus Horiacher



## Saranagati



MARCH 2019  
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IN THIS  
ISSUE

Dear Devotees,

In this issue, we read about encounters with Sri Bhagavan as seen through the eyes of family members and associates of Sri Janaki Matha who, over the course of her life, was responsible for bringing numerous seekers to the Maharshi (see p. 3, p. 7, and p. 8).

We also recount the story of Muruganar's first meeting with Bhagavan and the 'offering' the poet made that day (see p. 7 and p. 9).

For videos, photos and further news of events, go to <http://www.sriramanamaharshi.org> or write to us at [saranagathi@sriramanamaharshi.org](mailto:saranagathi@sriramanamaharshi.org)

In Sri Bhagavan,  
The Editorial Team

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## Calendar of Upcoming Events

4th March (Mon) Mahasivaratri  
16th March (Sat) Punarvasu  
20th March (Wed) Full Moon  
22nd March (Fri) Sri Vidya Havan  
6th April (Sat) Telugu New Year  
12th April (Fri) Punarvasu

13th April (Sat) Sri Rama Navami  
14th April (Sun) Tamil New Year/Nirvana Room  
18th April (Thurs) Full Moon  
2nd May (Thurs) Sri Bhagavan's 69th Aradhana  
10th May (Fri) Punarvasu  
18th May (Sat) Full Moon





## At the Feet of Sri Bhagavan The Life of Janaki Matha (pt. III)

**D**octor Ganapati, Janaki Matha and the two children returned from Austria in July 1932. The doctor was posted at Madurai Hospital and while there, their grown daughter, Annapoorani was given in marriage to Dr. Padmanabhan, the same Dr. Padmanabhan who would go on to become a staunch devotee of Sri Bhagavan.

Doctor Ganapathi was then transferred to Trichy and the family accompanied him there. Janaki took care of the house and used her free time for sadhana and spiritual study, reading from the Gita and other scriptures. She imposed dietary restrictions upon

herself: she gave up chilly, tamarind, pulses and lentils and used salt only with discretion.

Her days began early with prayers, recitation and meditation and ended the same way. Around this time a wandering elderly ascetic began visiting the house. A spiritual exchange between the two arose from these regular meetings, the monk promising her that if she remembered him in prayer, her family would never suffer for want of money. Sri Matha agreed to this request. Following this, she began to have noteworthy visitations of the Lord and darshans of Sri Hanuman and Sri Krishna.

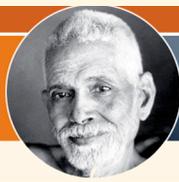
The doctor was sceptical at first and wondered openly about why the ascetic only came when he was not at home. Sri Matha grew in her longing to find a guru and because of this, sannyasins and spiritual adepts began to visit the house.

Once, in August 1934, when Dr. Ganapati returned from the hospital and had just sat down to lunch, someone appeared at the door. Sri Matha and her husband came out to receive the elderly ascetic who would only receive three handfuls of food which he immediately gulped down. He then said to Matha: "You wanted me to come when your husband is in and here I am." With this he blessed her. But before he departed, she begged him to bless her with a sadguru in human form. The Swami said, "If such be your wish, there is a mahatma in Tiruvannamalai by the name of Sri Ramana Maharshi. You may go there and have his darshan." He then showed Janaki a photo of Bhagavan that he had with him. It was the first time that she had heard about Bhagavan Sri Ramana or seen an image of his form.

From the beginning, her heart began to melt with affection for Bhagavan and she waited with eager anticipation for the opportunity to go to Tiruvannamalai. But because of his professional obligations, Dr. Ganapati was unable to get free. Thus, Janaki had to wait a good while.

In the meantime, she continued her sadhana and, day by day, she noticed the changes going on within her by virtue of her puja and prayer, all in the midst of her daily activities and household routines. One day, however, she had a vision of a giant serpent who promised to 'touch her' in her thirtieth year.





Not long afterwards, in January 1935, Matha had a severe pain in her lower back. On 18th January, all of a sudden, the lower portion of her body, from the waist down, seemed to have no connection with the upper portion. She found that she could neither walk nor move her limbs. For forty days, she remained bed-ridden, unable to even sit up. Her body temperature dropped to 97°, more than 1.5° below normal. The body's nerves seemed to have been affected and her heartbeat was weak. While her body was in a state of distress, her mind remained calm and at peace.

Dr. Ganapathi got advice from fellow medical professionals but was convinced that hers was not a medical condition but a spiritual one. For this reason, he refrained from treating her with pharmaceutical medicines.

Her condition continued for forty days, at which point she improved very suddenly and dramatically and her symptoms disappeared.

In the weeks and months that followed, various holy men and wandering ascetics, who seemed to know her fate, came to visit and made recommendations giving *upayas* to aid her. One of them predicted a pregnancy which came to pass.

Finally, in April 1935, Janaki Matha got her longed-for wish and Dr. Ganapathi took her to Tiruvannamalai by car. They reached the Ashram just as the evening Veda parayanam was starting. Bhagavan was sitting in the Hall. The moment Janaki Matha entered the hall, it was as if Bhagavan had been expecting her. Turning towards her, his gracious glance was directed towards her.

She stood transfixed by Bhagavan's penetrating gaze. After prostrating before him, she stepped aside. Bhagavan asked her to sit down. She felt intense joy and remained glued to the spot for the next two and a half hours.

At 8 pm, she and the doctor were compelled to take leave and return to their host's house. Sri Matha was relieved of every ill and found herself ripe to receive Bhagavan's boundless grace. Throughout the night, she experienced visions of Bhagavan blessing her.

At 7am the next morning, they returned to the Ashram. For Janaki Matha, Bhagavan sitting on



Bhagavan in the hall with Veda Patasala students

his sofa was no other than Lord Siva Himself. Thenceforth she thought of Bhagavan as the non-dual manifestation of Lord Arunachaleswara.

Janaki Matha remained in the Ashram till evening but when the time came to take leave of Bhagavan, she was unable to do so. Her reluctance was heightened by the fact that she and her husband were due to leave the next morning and return to Trichy. As Bhagavan sat on the couch on the outer veranda, Janaki Matha knelt before him, hoping for some instruction as to the sadhana she should adopt. Bhagavan looked on her with a compassionate gaze and said: "Continue in just the same way."

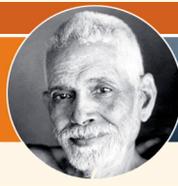
Her next visit took place in August the following year, when Bhagavan presented Janaki and her husband with a copy of *Upadesa Saram* and suggested how they might read it. All along, Janaki had prayed that devotion might be awakened in her husband. And now, he was blessed to receive guidance directly from the guru.

With a transfer from Trichy to Tanjore and then another to Cuddalore, which lay just seventy miles from the Ashram, the family seemed to be inching their way towards Bhagavan. By this time Dr. Ganapathi was convinced of Bhagavan's greatness and offered his wife his wholehearted support in her spiritual search, giving her the following assurance: "Though you are still in the family, you may live as though in an ashram. \* —

(to be continued)

\* This article is freely adapted from the *Biography of Guru Devi Sri Janaki Matha*, by her son, Dr. G. Swaminathan.





## Reminiscences of Dr. G. Swaminathan

**M**y name is G. Swaminathan. I am the son of Dr. C. S. Ganapathi Iyer and Janaki Matha. I am presently in charge of Janaki Matha's Ashram in Tanjore, a charitable trust established in 1944. Even though the ashram is called Janaki Matha Ashram, we consider it to be dedicated in the name of Sri Bhagavan.

My mother declared Bhagavan to be her guru and all of us are devotees of Bhagavan, have Bhagavan as our satguru, pray only to Bhagavan and do puja before his image.

Janaki Matha first saw Bhagavan in 1935 and with the permission of my father, performed regular puja to Bhagavan. Whenever she went to Tiruvannamalai I was blessed to accompany her.

In 1940 during Deeparadhana, I was asked to recite a *sloka* and, by Bhagavan's grace, I recited it correctly. But afterwards I could not recollect it and took this to mean that Bhagavan did not want me to recite it again.

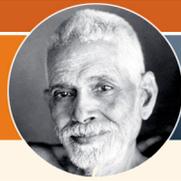
It was my brother-in-law, Seethapathi Iyer, who had helped in getting the electric supply for Sri Ramanasramam. Prior to that petromax lights were used in the Ashram. Once when I was only five years old, it was dark and I was lying on my mother's lap in the darshan hall. I was telling her that I could not see Bhagavan. Later, when the light came, I had the thought, "Light has come and I can see Bhagavan." This was explained by Bhagavan as when *ajnana* is removed, Bhagavan can be seen, just as all objects are seen by the light of the sun.

In 1946, I arrived alone at Sri Ramanasramam just as Bhagavan was about to take food in the dining hall. I prostrated before him and he said, "Oh, you are Swaminathan. Have you come alone? I knew you would come." I took these words as Bhagavan's blessing.

Another time, on a visit in 1949, I wanted to take a photo of Bhagavan as he was returning from the gosala along with devotees. In my shyness, I concealed the camera. I also did not want Bhagavan to know that I was trying to photograph him. At the very moment of seeing him, Bhagavan nodded in my direction and told the devotees that 'this boy' had a camera box and wanted to 'capture' Bhagavan inside it. Though I had been very careful to hide the camera, Bhagavan knew it was there, even though he had not seen it. But I took the photo anyway, and still have it today.

One time, when I stepped on a thorn, it became so deeply lodged in my heel that I was unable to extract it. It caused no small discomfort and in time the foot began to swell, so much so that I began to limp because of the pain. During my visit to Bhagavan, limping along, I began to pray to Bhagavan to take away this confounded thorn that had been plaguing me for so long. At the very moment of realising that I could just pray for Bhagavan's help, the thorn suddenly appeared at the surface of the skin and seemed to pop out on its own. The event was so striking and miraculous that I made a point of keeping the thorn as a souvenir, a tangible reminder of Bhagavan's extraordinary grace and mysterious healing power.





I was a close friend of Natarajan, known in Ramanasramam as Sadhu Om. Natarajan was a devotee of my mother. From 1944 he was with Janaki Matha and wrote hundreds of songs, many of which were published.

He was known as *Mathadasan* and used to accompany Janaki Matha wherever she went. He was the editor of the journal *Arulpatrikai*, propagating my mother's life. This all happened in the years before he came to Tiruvannamalai and devoted himself solely to Bhagavan.

Bhagavan got cancer in his upper arm since he bore the sins of the world. Similarly, my mother got cancer but never told me about it even though, as a doctor, I felt that I might have been able to help her. She endured the pain with forbearance thanks to Bhagavan's grace.

At the time of Bhagavan's Mahasamadhi, we were in Tanjore where I was taking my examinations. On getting the news, my mother did not take food for a

long time. We thought that she might never eat again, so distraught was she following the news. It was only after the persistent persuasion of family members that she discontinued her fast.

My mother's earthly departure in April 1969 took place on a Sunday morning at 6.43 am, as she sat facing southward, sitting in the meditation posture just like the great saints do. She told us to burn her body since she was a householder and gave us permission to build a samadhi over the ashes.

We constructed a temple over her Samadhi with the blessings of Sringeri Sankaracharya and, since then, I have been wearing the pendant of Bhagavan which she wore up until her earthly departure.

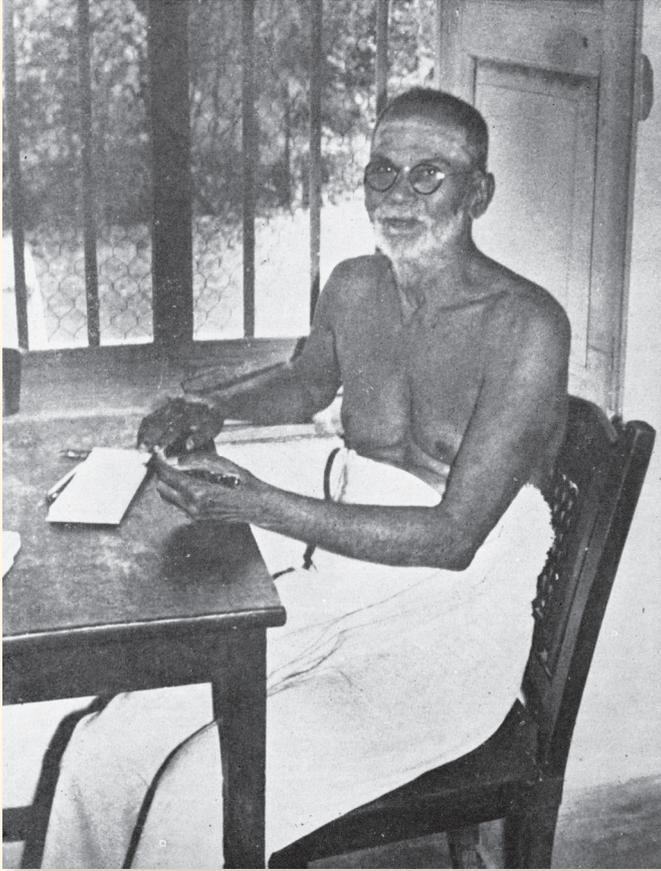
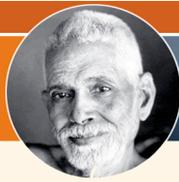
We performed Kumbhabhishekam at her samadhi in 1972, 1987 and 1999 and still regularly celebrate Bhagavan's Jayanti and Aradhana. —

## Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Sathabhishekam



On Friday 22nd February, Sathabhishekam for Mr. and Mrs. V. Subramanian took place in the Sri Ramanasramam Vedapatasala under the guidance and supervision of the senior patasala teacher, Sri Sentilnatha Ghanapatigal. The traditional 80th birthday celebration is normally performed on the nakshatra of the Tamil birth month when the 80th year has been completed. While *satha* commonly means 'hundred', in this instance, it has the signification of 'stable', 'uninterrupted' or 'complete'. Also called *Ayush Shanthi Homam*, the ceremony is said to foster the couple's health and longevity. Having completed eighty years, eight months and eight days, they will have seen one thousand full moons. The event marks a new stage in the spiritual search where lingering karmas affecting them or their children are purified. Relatives and friends gathered to witness the nine or so homas including Ganapathi, Lakshmi, Amurtha Mrityunjaya, Ayush and Danvantri Homas, among others; and finally, Kalasabhisheka, where the couple were anointed with the sacred tirtham. The ceremony concluded with the exchange of garlands, tying of mangala sutra, well-wishing and photographs. —





## Muruganar's Desika Padigam

One of Bhagavan's foremost devotees was Sri Muruganar. A consummate scholar, poet and saint, Muruganar's self-effacement was total and he sat unmoving like a shadow of Bhagavan. The devotion in his poetry was so great that Bhagavan declared Muruganar's magnum opus, *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai*, to be on par with Manikkavachagar's *Tiruvachakam*.

Muruganar was introduced to Bhagavan through *Arunachala Stuti Panchakam* and *Who am I*, Bhagavan's treasure troves of devotion and knowledge. These works were given to Muruganar by his father-in-law, Dandapani Swami, who had lived many years with Bhagavan up on the Hill. Perusing the texts, Muruganar instantly recognized Bhagavan as the incarnation of Lord Siva.

On September 21st, 1923, Muruganar reached Tiruvannamalai where he saw the tall towers of the Arunachala temple and went in. He stood in front of

the shrine of Lord Arunachaleswara and His Divine Consort, lost in adoration. It was a thrilling moment. But his excitement reached an even higher pitch when he contemplated the visit to Sri Ramanasramam. In anticipation of coming to the Ashram, however, he realized he had not brought any offering to lay at the Maharshi's feet. Immediately, he sat down and wrote a decad of verses in praise of Bhagavan. This poem, entitled *Desika Padigam*, was to be Sri Muruganar's first offering to the Master.<sup>1</sup>

Muruganar hastened to Ramanasramam with his verses in hand. Bhagavan was then living in the small thatched hut erected over Mother's samadhi. Muruganar felt unsure about how to approach Bhagavan and so remained outside for some time. Bhagavan solved the problem by coming out, saying: "Enna?" ("What?", a common way in Tamil of ascertaining what business a new visitor has).

In response to this query, Muruganar began to sing the verses of his poem. But emotion got the better of him. Tears welled up in his eyes and he was unable to continue. "Can't you read?" asked Bhagavan. "Give it to me. I shall read it myself." Bhagavan then read out the entire poem.

Up till this time Muruganar had been very particular about assigning specific ragas or melodies to his poems, since it was traditional that given metres be sung in prescribed ways. But after this first encounter, Muruganar was never able to sing his verses again, for no other reason than becoming overwhelmed with emotion.<sup>2</sup>

Bhagavan showered his grace upon this unique devotee with his silent, yet eloquent, gaze. Already his first darshan transformed the poet. In his own words, we get a sense of the power of the Master's gaze:

*With blazing bright, unwinking eyes,  
He gazed and drank in my whole Being.  
Swept off by such enchanting beauty,  
His utter slave have I become.<sup>3\*</sup> —*

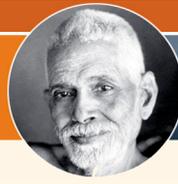
<sup>1</sup> *Cherished Memories*, T.R. Kanakammal, pp. 41-42.

<sup>2</sup> *The Mountain Path*, Oct 1973, p. 203.

<sup>3</sup> *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai*, v. 317, trans. Prof. K. Swaminathan.

\* Verse one of Muruganar's *Desika Padigam* appears at the bottom of p. 9.





## Coming to Bhagavan: Shyamala Ramachandran

**M**y mother Pattammal, a disciple of Janaki Matha, came for her first darshan of Bhagavan Sri Ramana, the Universal Mahaguru, in 1941. When we entered the hall, we saw Bhagavan feeding the monkeys with groundnuts. I was only six years old. I was astonished to see squirrels and monkeys taking the nuts directly from Bhagavan's own hands.

The happiness I felt when I first saw Bhagavan was immense. My mother told me to 'take hold' of Bhagavan. This phrase had a deep impact on me. Bhagavan's eyes were magnetic but I was afraid to look at them for long.

As a young girl at play without any inhibitions, I used to go round and round Bhagavan. On seeing me running around him repeatedly, he gently indicated that I should refrain from doing so.

On another occasion, I got a similar instruction from Bhagavan. If it had been anyone else, such a memory would have faded with time. But because it was Bhagavan, I recall the following ordinary incident with perfect lucidity:

Bhagavan was healthy in those days but he regularly used a walking stick when going for his walks. One day, I followed him automatically without even thinking about my mother who was sitting in meditation in the hall. After some distance, the attendant informed Bhagavan that a young girl was trailing behind him. Bhagavan turned and gestured to me with his walking stick that I should go back to the hall. I immediately turned and ran back.

While dining I wanted to sit as near Bhagavan as possible. After Bhagavan took his meal, my mother would casually take a piece of food from his leaf and hide it in her sari with the intention of giving it later to my brother, Venugopal, as *prasadam*.

It is a fact that we didn't take food but consumed Bhagavan's form. The beauty of the *kanpeenadhari* ('loincloth-clad one') has no equal. While others conversed with Bhagavan, neither my mother nor I knew what to say but simply observed and listened. He rarely replied except by his silence or by nodding his head. Only those who have heard his voice know the sweetness of his speech. When he spoke, it was often a cryptic remark with humour added in.

I used to sit in the first row where other VIPs were sitting. Tayumanavar once said that all our karmas are negated by the *dristi* (gaze) of the guru. Thus, Bhagavan's *dristi* was there to wipe out our accumulated karmas.

Bhagavan used to see and feel the hardships of those who came before him. Once, on reading a letter from a lady who begged for Bhagavan's help during a life crisis, Bhagavan wept tears on her behalf, a very poignant sight for those of us assembled in the hall.

My mother informed Bhagavan that she wanted suitable alliances for my two sisters. She told him that in my case, one horoscope had been received





with which they wanted to proceed, with Bhagavan's permission. Bhagavan gave his assent. The in-laws were devotees of Janaki Matha. The would be son-in-law was in Delhi but I had seen my mother-in-law earlier.

### The Days Before Bhagavan's Mahanirvana

During the Mahakumbhabhishekam we were present and were very happy to see Bhagavan taking arati and very beautifully applying *kumkumam* to his forehead.

Once in the later years, I got to stay in Tiruvannamalai for nearly five months in Janaki Matha's hut near the Ashram and each day had the opportunity to see and worship Bhagavan.

Janaki Matha and all of us would take bath at 3 am, do puja with fresh flowers and after *naivedyam* at exactly 5.20 am, perform arati. Afterwards, we made our way to the Ashram to have Bhagavan's darshan and be present to see him entering the hall majestically. Janaki Matha was always talking with Bhagavan.

I can remember one darshan during this time where a lady started to cry, jumping up and down in agony at seeing blood ooze from the wound on Bhagavan's arm following one of his surgeries. Immediately Bhagavan asked the attendant to replace the towel covering his shoulder, which had inadvertently fallen down, exposing the tender area.

In spite of the pain, Bhagavan was more concerned for the suffering his condition might cause others. One day a lady devotee cried out and pleaded with Bhagavan to transfer the disease and suffering to her, making the case that Bhagavan was needed by the entire world.

Devotees were amazed to see that in spite of his suffering, Bhagavan continued to give darshan each day. And yet, Bhagavan said that it was *he* that needed darshan, namely, of his devotees.

I recited *Soundarya Lahari* five hundred times before Bhagavan praying that he would live long without suffering. Three days before Bhagavan's Mahanirvana, Janaki Matha asked my mother to take us back since there was a heavy crowd in the Ashram.

Sadhu Om was also staying with us in Janaki Matha's house and forty to fifty people were taking food there because the Ashram was very crowded and it was difficult for Chinnaswamigal to provide food for everyone. That day I came across Kanakammal who was about twenty years old then.

At the time of Bhagavan's Nirvana, Janaki Matha swooned and was grieving for nearly a year, without food, as she was not able to bear the separation from Bhagavan. In time, however, we all came to see that there was in fact no separation from Bhagavan after his Mahanirvana. —

## Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai: Desika Padigam §1

பார் வளர் கயிலைப் பருப்பதம் நீங்கிப்  
பண்ணவர் சூழலை விட்டு  
வார் ஒளி மணி போல் வாசகர் வாக்கை  
வளர் செவி மடுத்திட விரும்பி  
ஏர் வளர் பெருந்தண்டுறை அடைந்தாற் போல்  
இழிசினேன் பொன் சொலும் வேட்டுச்  
சீர் வளர் அருணைச் செழும்பதி சேர்ந்தாய்  
தேசிக ரமண மா தேவே.

Guru Ramana, Siva, just as you once left  
Mount Kailasa and the company of  
Devas,  
And came to cool Perundurai to drink in  
The pearl-like, brilliant words of  
Manikavachakar,  
Now again you have come to fair Aruna Town  
Wishing to hearken to this lowly fellow's  
puerile words. —

